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TWO DISCOURSES

PREACHED IN THE

CHURCH OF THE ADVENT,

BOSTON,

ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1851.

5446 129

BY JOHN, BISHOP OF FREDERICTON,
NEW BRUNSWICK.

Published by request of the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY CHARLES STIMPSON,
1[illegible], WASHINGTON STREET.
1851.

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IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

OF THE

LATE REVERED AND FAITHFUL PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE ADVENT,

IN BOSTON,

THE REV. WILLIAM CROSWELL, D.D.

IN SOME OF WHOSE LAST ACTS OF FAITH AND COMMUNION A GRACIOUS GOD

PERMITTED ME TO JOIN,

THESE DISCOURSES,

PUBLISHED BY HIS ESPECIAL REQUEST, AND AT THE DESIRE OF HIS VESTRY,

ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR,

TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF HIS CONGREGATION WHO YET REMAIN

TO CHERISH HIS MEMORY,

TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE,

AND TO HOPE FOR HIS HOLY, HAPPY END.

SERMON.

"WHETHER ONE MEMBER SUFFER, ALL THE MEMBERS SUFFER WITH IT, OR ONE MEMBER BE HONORED, ALL THE MEMBERS REJOICE WITH IT." — 1. CORINTHIANS, xii. 26.

THERE is a very remarkable passage in another of St. Paul's Epistles, which may serve as an illustration of this text. In the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, the apostle declares, that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in birth-pangs, waiting for the adoption." We may understand him there to speak, not only of the feelings of thoughtful heathen and observant Jews before the first Advent of our Lord, but, in a wider sense, of that general state of weakness, depression, and infirmity, under which the world is held, and from which, though wanting words to express itself, it, as it were, "groans" to be delivered. We may suppose him to allude also to that mysterious sympathy which the several parts of the creation feel for each other, as exposed to all the manifold varieties of common suffering, and interested in a common deliverance.

Fellow-suffering and fellow-joy are the common bonds by which the world is held together. God has

so framed it, that one part cannot suffer without another: one part cannot rejoice without another. How entirely does the earth depend on Heaven! How rapidly does she feel the smallest suspension of celestial influences! As soon as the surface of the earth is affected, all its productions, all its inhabitants, feel the change. Not a leaf is tossed by the wind, not a flower blossoms, not an insect crawls upon the ground, which is not affected by a sudden tempest, by an unusual drought, by the hiding or the outshining of the sun. This is so evident, that poets, in all ages, have represented Nature (with scarcely a poetic license) as speaking and feeling. The spirit of prophecy revealed to the earlier Jewish bards, that this sensitive touch of Nature was applicable to our Lord's second Advent. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; let the floods clap their hands, let all the hills be joyful before the Lord, for He cometh." Earth, throughout all her members, feels the mighty impulse, and her heart beats for the coming of her great Restorer.

And this sympathy is stronger, as we rise from inanimate to animated nature. The beasts of the earth sympathize with the heavens and the earth, with each other, and with man. How evident are the tokens of joy which they exhibit in fine weather, and of distress in anticipation of a storm! In their own afflictions, they often put to shame human beings, mourn over sufferings which they cannot remove, and have been even known to die with

anguish after separation. How perfect is their sympathy with man! How humble their obedience! How faithful their affection! How often do they repay a word of kindness by a look of love, which leaps out of their eyes, and, like the dumb man's eloquence, wants not words.

This sympathy is, however, more full and perfect in man himself. The apostle refers in the text to the sympathies of the members of the human body. Each has its different office; each does its proper work, without any sense of inferiority on the one side, or exaltation on the other. Does one part of the human frame feel a wound, suffer a loss, endure a pain?—all the members of the body suffer with it. We feel general lassitude or burning thirst, and are disabled from performing our customary duties. Let the health of the part be restored, and the whole body wakes to life and activity.

This sympathy is found among the members of the body politic, as well as the body natural. How marvellous are the attachments of race, and clime, and caste! How strong is the sympathy which persons feel who have been educated in the same school, born in the same village, brought up in the same profession, especially if they chance to meet suddenly, after the lapse of time, in some place where all their old feelings return, and the deadening influence of the world is forgotten.

How strong is the sympathy of the poor for each other! With what generous heartiness do they give to others poorer than themselves, or adopt into their

families an orphan, or sit up whole nights with their poor neighbors without fee or reward!

But there is one sympathy which unites all in one, binds man to the creation, and the creation to man, man to his fellow-man, and to the angels of God; which softens the prejudices of race, dissolves the tyranny of caste, beats down the pride of birth and wealth, — the sympathy of the Church of God! Here, all are fellow-sinners redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, born anew by baptism, placed in the world in a new relation to God, to eternity, and to each other, and sent to do Christ's work, to help Christ's little ones, to enlarge Christ's fold, to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." This is that holy love, of which a great Saint* thus nobly writes: — "Love runneth, rejoiceth, and cannot be held in. Love giveth all for all, feeleth no burden, thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what is beyond its reach, complains not of impossibility. Love undertakes and completes many things, where he who does not love, faints and lies down. Love is ever watchful, and, sleeping, slumbereth not. Weary, it is not tired; pressed, it is not straitened; alarmed, it is not confounded; but, like a lively flame and burning torch, forces its way upwards, and securely passes through all. Love is a loud cry in the ears of God. My God, thou art all mine, and I am all thine."

Let us consider, then, how this sympathy will manifest itself, — what patterns and examples we may

* St. Thomas à Kempis.

follow, and in what manner we may best discharge this duty.

I. Sympathy speaks by action. It wastes no time in idle words. It transforms itself into the condition of the person who is to be pitied. It makes itself one with him. Thus our adorable Saviour looked upon lost mankind, sinking into the gulf of perdition, and passed not by on the other side. He saw poverty, and he clothed himself with it. He saw misery, and cold, and nakedness, and hunger and thirst, scorn and bitter pain, and he embraced it all. He saw sinners under the curse of God, and he was "made a curse for us." He saw the tempter busy in ruining souls, and he met the evil one face to face, and suffered his loathed and detested temptations. He saw death in all its forms, and wrestled with it in its most terrible form; and, having thus suffered in our flesh, he ascended up to heaven, and, as the sun in the spring-tide raises the prostrate form of nature from the ground, He drew us up after Him to His Father's throne.

Here, then, is our pattern. Let us feel for the dumb; for Christ looked up to heaven and sighed. Let us feel for the surviving relatives of the dead; for Christ wept at the grave of Lazarus. Let us feel for the sick; for Christ healed all that had need of healing, and himself "took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." Let us bear with the ignorant and the captious; for Christ long and patiently bore with his disciples. Let us feel for the widow and the fatherless; for Christ said, "I will not leave you

orphans, I will come to you."* Let us feel for the small and for the great, for little and for great misfortunes; for He who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust," feels for each part of that frame, and for all our weaknesses and littlenesses. Let us not think any thing beneath our sympathy; for He thought nothing too mean for His compassion.

II. From the sympathy of our Lord we may pass to the sympathy of angels. They might be supposed to have little in common with us; but, through Christ, they are full of love and pity to lost mankind. They hear the wondrous news that Christ is born at Bethlehem, and lo! a countless multitude appears with songs. They see a single sinner turn from the error of his way, and lo! again the voice of praise is heard. In many ways, probably, unknown to us, they supply our wants, cheer us in difficulties, and, though unseen, still feed an Elijah in the wilderness, replenish the widow's cruse, still bear on high Manoah's sacrifice, still watch over the wounds of Lazarus, and bear him to Abraham's bosom. Their ministry is not ended, because their forms are invisible, and every mission of mercy is like the ministry of an angel.

III. Come we now to our own sympathy with each other, as members of the Catholic Church of

* John, xiv. 18.

God. We have, indeed, a thousand sympathies in the Church, which are only beginning to be known. Our baptism is one point of sympathy. In all parts of the world Christ is gathering to himself a little flock out of this evil world by the bonds of heavenly love. Day by day, and even hour by hour, the souls of infant children, over whose departure we ignorantly weep, are ascending pure and stainless from the baptismal font, clothed in their Redeemer's righteousness, the jewels of His crown. To this holy company, we who are left behind are united. Though our baptismal robe is stained with sin, yet the merit of Christ's blood can wash it away: our faith, our repentance, and our tears, a compassionate Saviour will own, and will enable us by his grace to pay Him that obedience, which will fit us to enjoy his promised mercy. This is a bond of union which time cannot dissolve, which eternity will only cement and strengthen. Once let us realize it, and there will be no lack of sympathy.

Let us again remember our common acts of faith, of worship, and of praise. At no very distant period the little sea-girt isle of England had no congregations of the faithful in her communion beyond her own narrow shores. Now, nearly one hundred Bishops belong to her communion. All the great points of the world are being taken up, and secured for the Kingdom of Christ. In Southern and in Western Africa, in the East and West Indies, in the great continents of America and Australasia, and even in China, Bishops are placed. Wherever

there is a bishop, there is not only a centre of unity, but a rallying point for action. The Bishop, by God's ordinance, stands not alone. He has in himself the power to send, to increase, to multiply. By these few loaves and fishes, these fragments of his saving mercy, the Great Bishop of souls still feeds his scattered flock, and everywhere augments his fold. Where there is a Bishop, there is a Cathedral Church, the mother-Church of the diocese, Jerusalem and her daughters. From thence is sounded out the word of the Lord; there are assembled at visitations, the presbyters, the deacons, and the faithful; there are held the solemn festivals, the continual Eucharist, the frequent baptisms, the ordinations in due season, the same daily prayer, the same or similar chants, and anthems of holy joy. Broken hearts are there bound up, thankful hearts pour forth their Eucharist, mourners are comforted by the soothing strains of their holy mother, and the dead are borne to the grave with the same words of pious consolation. When the word of God was confined to a single Church, and that Church shut up in Palestine, no sounds of health and salvation were heard in these distant and benighted parts of the world. But now, in the East and West, in the North and South, the high praises of our God are sung. No day declines, no interval of night succeeds, without hymns of thanksgiving. When we retire to rest, the opposite nations of the globe begin their matin-chant; and when they sing their even-song, our early prayer awakes. Thus, everywhere, earth, to her utmost bounds, echoes the thanksgivings of heaven,

and we can truly say, "Day by day we magnify Thee, and we worship Thy name, ever, world without end."

Our united Church, therefore, can no longer be called barren. God hath visited her; the Most High hath made her a fruitful mother of children. We deny not to other churches,—the Latin and the Greek,—their apostolical foundation, their proper mission in their several spheres. Only we maintain and cherish our own. We wish not to speak harshly of them; but we dare not hold what is without foundation in the written word. They may, in some instances, deny us the grace of which we trust we are in possession; yet will we not be driven by hard words to curse or to revile them in return. They may seduce from our Communion the learned or the simple, we will the more hold fast to the rock on which we rest; our confidence is unshaken, our zeal is unabated, our love is even stronger for affliction. Sensible, however, of our own many imperfections, we desire to purify ourselves before we offer to reform them; and we believe that all real reformation begins at home. Oh! what a blessing it would be to the whole world, if the two great nations of America and England could but perceive and seize the happy time, and know that this is indeed their day to bear witness to Christ among the nations of the earth; if nations called in some degree, as Israel of old, "by temptations, by wonders, and by war," whose empires encircle the earth, whose fleets sweep the ocean, whose common language is spoken by increasing millions of the human race,

whose Bible translation is found wherever the Saxon race advances, whose Prayer Book unites vast continents in acts of primitive faith and worship, serves to connect us with the ancient church, and may, by God's blessing, open a way for communion with the Churches of the East, would cast away from themselves the hateful love of mammon and the jealousies of party warfare, and, honoring each other as freemen, loving each other as Churchmen, would henceforth make war against ignorance, superstition and infidelity, throughout the world.

One trembles to think how our Church seems to be put upon her awful trial, to rise or fall, as she is faithful or unfaithful to her God. Everywhere the powers of evil seem to be concentrating their energies for one more great effort, before the evening of the world comes on, "and their memorial perishes with them."

Anarchy, rationalism, and infidelity, gain ground in the East and West, in Europe and America. What is strong but the promises of Christ? and to what body but to the Church is the promise of continuance made? Let us humbly hope, that, if "God had been pleased to kill us," he would not have enlarged our borders, and stirred men's hearts to offer these sacrifices to his honor. Our agitations, our weakness, our divisions, our distresses, deplorable as they are, are better, we may trust, than Laodicean slumber. Evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse; but the devout are becoming holier, the liberal are "devising more liberal things," the self-denying are more

regardless of self, and the luxurious and the heartless are becoming more vain and heartless than ever. Broken and disjointed as our efforts are, let us hope that the effort of the "withered hand" shall be blessed, and we shall be "made whole." Only let us not be boastful of ourselves, nor fond of cursing others. Let us go on daily praying against the sins which hinder God's grace from descending on us. Let us thirst after his love, and He will give it to us. Whatever our private differences may be, let us be earnest after more devotion and reverence; a greater freedom from selfishness, vain-glory, pride, and foolishness; a deeper awe for divine mysteries, a more constant sense of the Divine Presence, a greater readiness to believe and hope the best of each other; a more humble, honest, enterprising, self-sacrificing spirit, in all we think, or say, or do. I rely on the existence of this blessed spirit among you, my brethren, when, by the kind permission of your pastor, I venture to request a little aid towards the completion of a work in which I have been slowly and patiently toiling for the last six years. Personal acquaintance with many of you I cannot claim. To residence or citizenship I can make no pretensions. But I aspire to something higher. I claim to be with you a citizen of Zion, "built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone;" a member of the same church which embraces us all within its fold, which is guided by the same light, fights with the same enemies, rejoices in the same prosperity, and hopes for the same ultimate

triumph. I too, then, am a brother; and your original is the same with mine. Whence did you derive your Bible, your Sacraments, your orders, your ministry, your Church, your hope of salvation? Who first planted in your now magnificent empire,—once a moral and a natural wilderness,—a pure faith, a holy ritual, a body of Catholic truth?—and who consigned to your hands the fulness of Sacramental grace? By what missionaries were your Churches first occupied? By whose bounty were these branches of the true vine fostered, watered, and protected? Owe you not all these blessings, under a gracious Providence, to that great Missionary Society, which, this very year, has celebrated its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, whose noblest work, beyond all comparison (in my judgment), is the securing, amidst adverse hosts and more stubborn prejudices, the peaceful prize of the American Church; a prize won, not for self, but for God; won, not by the arms, but by the prayers, and tears, and faithful efforts of those pious souls, who planted the seed, and saw it die in the ground, but lived not to witness its happy resurrection, and to share in the exalting conquests of the Prince of Peace. The objects which I have had in view, ever since I first came to my Diocese, have been similar to those which you yourselves pursue. First, the extension of the field of missionary labor. In furtherance of this branch of duty, it has pleased God to help my humble efforts by an increase of the clergy from thirty to fifty, and, I trust, by a corresponding increase of the means of grace, and of those

who join in our services. Secondly, by church-union for the purpose of aiding all the charitable designs which a Church should seek to promote. And, thirdly, by building a Cathedral Church, with a view to lead men's minds to more devotion and humility in the service of the Almighty. Its progress has been necessarily slow, because it has been built at a time, when, though all the luxuries of life are increased a hundred-fold, it is the fashion with many to consider as waste any attempt to adorn and make beautiful the house of God. The inhabitants of Fredericton have, however, given me considerable assistance; and the heavy calamity of fire which burnt down a large portion of the city in the autumn of last year, has, of necessity, pressed heavily on our resources. I am happy, however, to say, that the external part is entirely completed, and it only now remains to finish what has been begun and continued, in hope of the blessing of the Most High. I may add, that it will hold from eight hundred to a thousand worshippers, and that all the seats in it will be unsold.

And may that God, who has made us one together in His Church, bind us closer in the bonds of heavenly love. As we chant together the same psalms, may our prayers and good works ascend together, through the merits of our common Redeemer, to the mercy-seat on high; and may we all follow that blessed company who have gone before us, who, having been brethren in adversity, now share the glories of the Celestial Paradise, who are clothed with one robe,

shine with one light, utter one untiring song, in which the melody of the heart is as pure, as the harmony of the parts is complete; who, in a word, find "all their sorrows left behind, and earth exchanged for Heaven." AMEN!

SERMON.

"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."—St. Mark, xvi. 19.

In these few and simple words does the Evangelist, after his manner, describe the greatest event which ever happened in the world,—the source of all blessings to the company of believers here and hereafter. What angelic hosts accompanied him as he went up, what songs of love and adoration met him in the air, and entered with him into heaven, the mind may imagine, but the record is not preserved. Yet, as the angelic host were present when he "emptied himself" to be born of a woman, and as two at least of the number watched the place where the Lord lay, we may without presumption gather, that they ascended with Him into glory, and "awoke to joy" the spirits of the blest, who had long waited for the great Deliverer's coming.

And even the disciples, by a miracle of mercy, cast all their griefs and doubt away, and "returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Now were the

Scriptures opened to their minds. Their hearts were full of wonder and of love. They were ready to preach the word in season, and to suffer for the truth's sake, welcoming reproach and shame, if, at the last, they might "shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

And should not some portion of their joy be felt by ourselves? We are not "men of Galilee, gazing up into heaven," after our ascended Saviour. But are we not, as they were, "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God?" Are we not baptized Christians, the redeemed of the Lord? Are not the same Scriptures before us? Are not the same truths our birthright? Is not the same hope of salvation made known to us? What blessing has the lapse of eighteen centuries quenched or diminished? Nay, in one respect, we have more cause for joy than they; for surely our Lord's second Advent is drawing nearer. Every Ascension Day brings us nearer to that glorious era, when Ascension and Advent shall be one, when Christ shall be no longer "absent from us in the body," but present as the Lord; when the new Jerusalem shall be seen descending from above, Christ's redeemed celestial bride, a blessed and a countless throng, containing in that vast and ever increasing multitude, some, at least, whom we have known and loved on earth, and about to receive some (Oh! that it might be all) of this present congregation.* But let us now pass on to consider, in the ex-

* How little did we anticipate that your blessed pastor would be the first to follow in this train!

planation of this passage, what are the blessings connected with our Lord's Ascension.

I. The Ascension of our Lord was the great witness to his innocence and righteousness. He alone had fulfilled the law, he alone could ascend to the Father. This our Lord had declared, when he said, "when the spirit of truth is come, that is of MY RIGHTEOUSNESS, he shall convince the world of righteousness," because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more. By this event, all the accusations of the wicked were proved to be false. "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" The Father had accepted his sacrifice, had acknowledged his merit, and had placed in his hands as man, and as mediator, the kingdom of heaven and earth. This enables us to understand, why our Lord's ascension into glory is described as the reward of his sufferings. "He humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore, also, hath God highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," and this was done, "to the glory of God the Father." We are not to infer, that it was not done to the glory of God the Son also; for our Saviour says, "all things that the Father hath are mine;" he requires that "all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father;" and they honor the Father with worship and adoration as the supreme God. Nay, St. John assures us, that Christ is "the true God," and St. Paul, that he is "God above all, blessed for evermore," and that he is "before all things, and that by him all things were

made." But inasmuch as the Father, as Father, has a glory which the Son, as Son, has not; and as the Son, as man, is glorified and exalted by his Father, as God, therefore the exaltation of the risen body of Christ, is "to the glory of God the Father," who sent him into the world. For even the Son, as man, is to be "subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

II. Our Lord's ascension was the way to his glory, as King and Judge of all mankind; it is thus that the Apostle describes him as "sitting at the Father's right hand, far above all principality and power." He was seen by St. Stephen standing, which is the posture of a combatant; but is commonly described as sitting, which is the posture of a judge. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle speaks of him as reigning; and the Psalmist says, "the Lord is King, he sitteth between the cherubims," that is, on the seat of covenanted mercy; for the cherubims, in the Jewish temple, spread out their wings over the ark, and the mercy seat, the great emblems of our redemption.

All things in nature, providence, and grace, are subject to His will, are controlled by His power, are directed by His wisdom, are sustained by His love. Innumerable worlds, innumerable creatures in each world, gifted with various powers of life and intelligence, are all cared for by Him at the same instant. His mind comprehends, at a glance, the almost infinite proportions of the universe; and He is, virtually, and by control, present at once, in every part of it. The

angels continually behold Him, "binding the sweet influences of Pleiades," and "clothing the grass of the field," "guiding Arcturus and his sons," and hearing the cry of the wild beast in the desert, and of the wailing infant at its birth, controlling the dark designs of the blaspheming legions of hell, and breathing comfort in the heart of the penitent, and giving strength to the walk of the believer. Yet the eternal Son sits on the throne of Heaven, clothed in human form, never forgetful of Bethlehem, of Mount Olivet, or of Calvary. Each separate saint in glory, each several pilgrim on earth, He knows by name. Their history, their difficulties, their fears, their sorrows, and their joys, are all His own. Oh, thought too great for utterance, too mighty almost for human contemplation!

III. But, further, our Lord's ascension into glory prepared the way for His intercession. The intercessory part of our Lord's priestly office, is one of the most important parts of His mediatorial work. And it behoves us to have clear and distinct conceptions of it, as far as the Scriptures reveal it to us. He is represented, in the symbolic language of the Revelations, standing "as a lamb that had been slain," for his glorified body still bears the marks of His passion, and has an intercessory virtue in its very presence. For if, on earth, virtue went out from His body, before He was glorified, and healed all who had need of healing; much more do fresh springs of grace, and strength, and compassion, and pardon, issue from His

body in heaven, of which His Church mystically forms a part. When we reflect, that we thus present our prayers and offerings through "the Lamb that was slain," to the Father, how joyfully do the Psalmist's words ring out in our ears, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee;" "When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up;" "Though an host of men were set against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid;" "Thou hast ascended up on high, and hast received gifts for men!" We desire no better Intercessor,—we ask for no more effectual pleader of our cause, than the great sacrifice for the sins of the world. He who laid down his own life to save ours, can want no stimulus from others to relieve and pity us. No name in earth or in heaven can compare with His in tenderness, no name in earth or in heaven can vie with His in wisdom, no name in earth or in heaven can compete with His in power. There was indeed one on earth whom He honored above all her sex, by condescending to call her by the sacred name of Mother. But whence came this endearing, this most wondrous name? Was it not from His original love? Was He not, as the Eternal Word, the fountain of all her purest thoughts, and holiest joys? And if she were both "highly favored," and "full of grace," was not that very grace God's undeserved goodness to His servant? How, then, can we for one moment imagine, that this most worthy creature, who owes every thing to her Creator's love, should be necessary to infuse fresh sympathy and affection into the heart of the Creator

himself? We might, with more reason, ask the dew-drop, that trembles on the little leaf, to swell the multitudinous sea, or bestow its plenteousness on the assembled clouds of heaven. Nay, let all the angels and saints in glory combine together, and let there be added thereto all the grace that dwells in the inhabitants of the countless stars of the firmament, and all is but as a single drop of goodness, flowing out of the vast encircling tide of Christ's unmeasured, unexhausted, everlasting love.

So that the words "put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man," apply universally, and have no exception, even in the mother of our Lord and God, "blessed" and, honored though she be, "above all women," throughout all generations. We do not detract from her dignity, we rather preserve it, when we say, "There is but one Mediator between God and men;" one Intercessor, "the man Christ Jesus."

But, if Christ ever live to intercede, should not we also ever live to pray? Here, then, lies the practical use of daily public prayer. It is the gathering together of the faithful, to remind each other of Christ's intercession, to desire to reap the benefit of it, to enjoy the assurance of it. It may be said, that this can be done at home, as well as at Church. But the same argument may be applied to the observance of the Lord's day. It may be said, "I can read the Bible at home, as well as the clergyman can read it to me." Now, as far as reading the letters and syllables of the Bible, this is very true; but it is rarely found, that those who absent them-

selves from Church on the Lord's day, spend their time in reading the Bible. Even so I question, whether those who say that they do not require the prayers of the Church to remind them of Christ's intercession, spend their time in prayer at home. The truth is, they do not think common prayer of importance enough to lay themselves out for it, by using all practicable leisure times for its performance. If they felt that it was a blessing to their own souls, they would use it whenever their lawful business permitted. He who feels prayer to be a blessing, has something within him which renders it as impossible wholly to abstain from it, as to abstain altogether from bodily food. There are times when food is not desired; but, in a healthy state, we cannot live without it. In like manner, the soul wants daily food. This food is prayer; *private* prayer; *social*, or family prayer; *public*, or common prayer. So far from either of these duties clashing, they assist each other. They keep up the life of God in the soul of man. They remind us of a daily, hourly walk with God, and of the benefit of His presence, and watchful care over us. They begin the work of heavenly praise on earth. They put some check (alas! how faint and ineffectual a check) on the vortex of Mammon and dissipation of heart which surrounds us. They prepare the soul to take wing, and fly away. Suppose we were to be seized with a stroke of paralysis, or of any sudden disease, where could we be found with so much comfort, as on our knees in public prayer? We might be

suddenly smitten, so as never to recover our speech or hearing. Would not the very strength and purity of prayer lend wings to our enfeebled body, so that it might be said of us, though speechless, or incapable of hearing the word, "behold, he prayeth."*

IV. Christ's Ascension was the means of procuring God's greatest gift to the Christian Church, the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Though the holy spirit was given to the saints in old time, — for they spake by his inspiration, and all good things come from Him, — yet we read, that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Not only did the Holy Ghost descend on the Apostles at the day of Pentecost in a manner never known before, but his gifts were bestowed on all faithful Christians in greater fulness and abundance, than on the Church after Christ's Ascension. Great saints there were before the coming of Christ; but fewer, I suppose, than after His coming. And though the standard of perfection was higher, the number of those who approached it was greater. Few good men under the Old Testament dispensation seemed to have equalled Noah, Abraham, Job, or Daniel; but I imagine that St. Paul excelled them all, not only in the abundance, but in the perfection of his gifts.

What does the world owe, under God, to that one

* How blessed is the recollection, that the summons to return found your loved pastor on his knees, in act to bless you, and to pray for a blessing! You will remember that the words are now pointed, as they were preached.

man? The greater part of the Christianity of Europe and America, dates its commencement, in all probability, from the labors and writings of St. Paul. How precious a fruit was this of Christ's Ascension! What joy must have run through the courts of heaven, when the angels proclaimed, that the relentless persecutor of the feeble Church in Judea was arrested, converted, baptized, and, by temporal blindness, had become the spiritual light of the world! But what angel in glory could have foreseen the whole illustrious result? Thus does the conquering king "ride meekly on," borne on the wings of righteousness and truth, while of successive generations of his willing captives the inspired poet sings, "with joy and gladness shall they be brought, and shall enter into the king's palace; instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children whom thou mayest make princes in all lands." "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Sion, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Finally, Christ's Ascension is the proper proof of his present humanity, and the great pledge that he will return. Hence his Second Advent is called a "presence," a "manifestation," "an appearance," as of a body existing locally, and really to come amongst us again. Two facts are undeniable. First, that the time of his return must be nearer than when the promise was given; and, secondly, that the state of the world, in its main features, grows continually more and more like the time when we are taught to look

for his coming. The witness of the Gospel is more generally proclaimed. Knowledge is more widely spread. The means of salvation are placed within the reach of a large part of the world. Yet dark and troubled are the waters and the skies. A general agitation pervades every branch of the Church Catholic. Men sigh for unity, but cannot find it, or seek it in error. The love of the world grows more and more intense in the hearts of men. Belief in any distinct system of truth grows weaker, and multitudes realize nothing, believe nothing, love nothing, fear nothing. Mammon is the measure of every thing, and frequently takes the place of right and wrong. Concession is considered the standard of wisdom, and every truth revealed in the Bible is willingly surrendered in turn, to conciliate the good-will of mankind. Parental authority is becoming the exception, not the rule. Governments are weak, and exist in many countries, because nothing better or stronger can take their place. These are tokens that the "Lord draweth nigh;" and, though to predict the absolute nearness of this event would be a foolish presumption, to watch the various kinds of His approach, and to rejoice with trembling, is the part of the liegemen of the Cross, the followers of an ascended Lord. One thing we know, for He has told us. When the proud scoffer cries, "Where is the promise of his coming," then will the King of Glory return. When the world is locked in sleep, and dreams of everlasting continuance, then will the bolt be launched. When the carcase lies prostrate at the feet of Mammon and unbelief, then spring the

avenging eagles forth. When the fourth watch of the night is come, the form of the Great Watcher is seen, "walking upon billows," and the ship draws nigh to the eternal shore.

Let us now draw one practical conclusion from what has been said. Those who would ascend to "meet the Lord in the air," must walk with the Lord on earth. Let us walk with Him, then, in our daily devotions, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," hoping for His protection, trusting in His providence, and expecting His mercy. Let us walk with Him when the bell calls us to public prayer, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," as the manner of too many is. Let us walk with Him in our leisure hours, lifting up secret ejaculations, in the open field, at the morning dawn, at even-tide, and in the silence of the night. Let us walk with Him in hours of business, when His awful presence seems out of sight, when lying and dishonesty stalk abroad, when temptation is pressing, and snares close round our path. Let us walk with Him in our recreation and mirth, never suffering our cheerfulness to sink into license, but remembering that it is "God who giveth us all things richly to enjoy," and that "every creature of God is to be received with thanksgiving." Let us walk with Him in time of trouble, when men accuse us falsely, when pains and losses come upon us as an armed man, when our eye is dim, and our memory gone, and our natural force abated. Then shall we walk with Him when death is nigh, and the awful tokens of our decay shall bring His presence more

sensibly near, and our sick bed shall be the presence chamber of the King of Kings; and, as the cords give way that bind this mortal body to the earthly shore, the soul shall stretch out her hands to embrace the heavenly. Then shall we know that the ark of God bears us up, that the Lord himself hath shut us in, that His rod and staff comfort our steps, that our prayers are all answered, and our voyage past, and the long wished for land in sight; that the false tongues that assailed us have done their worst, and the devil that tempted us has lost his power. One short, decisive, bitter struggle more, and lo! heaven opens, and Christ, "with all his shining train," surrounds us, and we pass out of this gloomy valley into the calm and peaceful region of Eternal Day.

AMEN!

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